

Message Text

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H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 DRC-01

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P R 030630Z JUL 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1329

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2349

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY DACCA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 7467

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: MID-YEAR PRC INTERNAL POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY. TENSIONS ARE RISING MORE SHARPLY NOW IN THE YEAR-OLD NEW EPISODE IN CHINA'S INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE, ALTHOUGH THE NEO-CULTURAL REGOLUTION MOVEMENT ITSELF IS NOT YET SELF-SUSTAINING AND AROUSES LITTLE MASS ENTHUSIASM FACTIONALISM AND OLD RIVALRIES WITHIN THE POLITICAL ELITE ARE CAUSING THE TROUBLE AND WHILE NONE OF THE FORCES INVOLVED WANT CHAOS, THE WORST IS YET TO COME. TIME IS RUNNING OUT MORE SWIFTLY FOR MAO AND CHOU, AND IT IS EVEN HARDER THAN BEFORE TO SEE ANYONE WHO COULD STEP INTO THEIR SHOES IN A SMOOTH AND EASY SUCCESSION. HOWEVE, AT THIS POINT THE SYSTEM ITSELF IS ABSORBING THE STRAIN WITHOUT MALFUNCTIONING, AND THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EFFECT NOW VISIBLE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS THE INCREASING PREOCCUPATION OF THE LEADERSHIP WITH THEIR DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. A NEW EPISODE IN CHINA'S INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE IS NOW A YEAR OLD AND IT HAS BECOME THE REGIME'S OVERWHELMING PREOCCUPATION. THE NEO-CULTURAL REVOLUTION MOVEMENT BEHIND WHICH THE STRUGGLE ADVANCES HAS SO FAR AROUSED LITTLE POPULAR ENTHUSIASM BUT IS STIRRING UP FACTIONAL STRIFE AMONG POLITICAL ACTIVISTS AND CURRENT OFFICE HOLDERS. TENSION, DISLOCATION, AND DISORDER ARE ON THE RISE. THE SITUATION AT PRESENT FALLS FAR SHORT OF THE CHAOS PRODUCED AT THE HEIGHT OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT NONE OF THE FORCES INVOLVED IN THIS MOVEMENT WANT TO RISK THAT KIND OF CHAOS AGAIN. THE JULY 1 EDITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGED THE INTRA-PARTY STRUGGLE BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN BUT ASSERTED THAT THIS DOES NOT IMPLY A WEAKENING OF PARTY LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, ALL CURRENT SIGNS POINT TO AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE STRUGGLE IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, AND THE WORST IS YET TO COME.

2. A YEAR IS NOT ADEQUATE PERSPECTIVE FOR VIEWING THE STRUGGLE THAT IS BEING PLAYED OUT ON THE CHINA SCENE AND RECENT WALL POSTERS AND MEDIA COMMENT ATTEST TO THIS. THE STRUGGLE HAS
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ROOTS IN THE LIN PIAO AFFAIR OF 1971, BEYOND THAT IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND, STILL DEEPER, IN THE QUESTION OF SUCCESSORS TO THE LONG MARCH GENERATION OF REVOLUTIONARIES. THE TAP ROOTS MAY WELL REACH INTO THE CENTURIES-OLD PROBLEM OF DYNASTIC TRANSITION IN CHINA. SOME OF THIS LONG PERSPECTIVE COMES INTO FOCUS THROUGH EVENTS DURING THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1974.

3. A NEW PHASE BECAME APPARENT IN APRIL WHEN THE MOVEMENT'S

POLITICAL NATURE POKED THROUGH ITS EDUCATIVE WRAPPINGS WITH DIRECT PERSONAL ATTACKS ON INDIVIDUAL LEADERS. AS EXPECTED, THE ATTACK COMES FROM THE LEFT AND AIMS AT REDRESSING THE OUSTER FROM POWER OF LEFTIST FORCES WHICH OCCURRED AFTER THE MILITARY STEPPED IN TO HALT THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. MOST OF THOSE BEING ATTACKED WIELD POWER AT THE PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL BUT OBVIOUSLY HAVE AFFILIATIONS AND CONNECTIONS IN THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. THE LIST OF THOSE ATTACKED IS GROWING AND, TO WHATEVER ULTIMATE EFFECT, NOW INCLUDES THREE POLITBUREAU FIGURES: LI TEH-SHENG, PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN, CHIEF MILITARY COMMISSAR, AND COMMANDER OF THE STRATEGIC MANCHURIAN REGION; CULTURAL AUTHORITY AND PEKING MUNICIPAL CHIEF WU TEH; AND HUA KUO-FENG, AGRICULTURAL AUTHORITY AND HUNAN CHIEF. OTHER POSTERS HAVE REVEALED WITHIN THE PARTY OPPOSITION TO VICE CHAIRMAN WANG HUNG-WEN.

4. THE LIST OF SPECIFIED CHARGES BEING AIRED IS LONG AND VARIED BUT HIGHLIGHTS MISDEEDS IN SUPPRESSING THE LEFT AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, PARTICIPATING IN THE LIN PIAO COUP PLOT, AND MOST DYNAMICALLY, OPPOSING THE CURRENT MOVEMENT. THE OVERALL CHARGE IS REVISIONISM, AND FOR THOSE WHO RECALL THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION THERE IS A TOUCH OF DEJA VU IN CHEKIANG RADIO'S RECENT ASSERTION THAT "THE BROAD REVOLUTIONARY MASSES HAVE RISEN UP IN REBELLION AGAINST A HANDFUL OF CAPITALIST ROADERS WITHIN THE PARTY."

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. THE CHARGE OF OPPOSING THE CURRENT MOVEMENT INVOLVES MISUSE OF AUTHORITY TO SUPPRESS CRITICISM, AN ABUSE OF POWER WHICH YOUNG PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN AND CULTURAL REVOLUTIONIST WANG HUNG-WEN DENOUNCED AT THE PARTY CONGRESS LAST AUGUST, AND THIS HAS POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR AN ASSAULT TO SOME EXTENT ON THE INSTITUTIONS OF POWER THEMSELVES. DEVELOPMENTS WHILE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BEING PREPARED GIVE SOME TENUOUS SUGGESTION THAT PARTY COMMITTEES IN TWO PROVINCES, KIANGSI AND FUKIEN, HAVE COME UNDER CHALLENGE WITH A MOVE TO MAKE THEM SHARE CONTROL OVER THE MOVEMENT WITH MILITARY AND MASS REPRESENTATIVES. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND OTHER ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES HAVE ALSO BEGUN TO APPEAR.

6. AS USLO HAS COMMENTED IN REPORTING PEKING POSTERS, THERE IS A RISING CALL FOR GREATER FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, DEMOCRACY, AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. THIS IS REMINISCENT OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND STILL EARLIER OF THE HUNDRED FLOWERS MOVEMENT IN THE 1950'S. BOTH OF THOSE VENTURES TOPPLED OVER ON THEIR ORIGINAL ACTIVISTS, LEAVING THE SYSTEM, TO JUDGE FROM THE

COMPLAINTS OF TODAY'S POSTER PASTERS, LITTLE CHANGED IN ITS PROCLIVITY FOR AUTHORITARIAN RULE. APPARENTLY SOME SPIRIT TO PROTEST THIS LIVES ON. HOWEVER, THE CULTURAL REVOLUTIONISTS IN THEIR DAY WERE NOT DISTINGUISHED FOR RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS, A POINT WHICH WOULD COMPLICATE THE DRAWING OF ANY FIRM MORAL JUDGMENTS NOW ABOUT THIS PRESENT STRUGGLE. IN MAOIST TERMS AS IN LENINIST TERMS, SUPPRESSION IS A QUESTION OF WHO TO WHOM.

7. IN APRIL CHOU EN-LAI, WHO HAS HELPED STEER THE REGIME THROUGH POLITICAL STRUGGLES AND CRISES FOR THE 25 YEAR OF ITS EXISTENCE, BEGAN TO CUT BACK ON HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES. IN WHAT AT TIMES SEEMED BRUTAL CANDOR, PRC OFFICIAL SOURCES DESCRIBED THE PREMIER AS "OLD AND SICK," BUT IT IS ALSO SAID THAT HE IS SAVING HIS ENERGY TO ATTEND TO IMPORTANT AFFAIRS AND IS STILL VERY MUCH IN AUTHORITY. ONE REPORT HAS CLAIMED THAT HE NEEDS SIX MONTHS REST. WE HAVE NOTHING CONCRETE TO ADD TO WHAT WE SUGGESTED EARLIER AS POSSIBLE GROUNDS TO THINK CHOU A TARGET IN THE STRUGGLE. BUT THIS IS A STRANGE TIME TO SIDELINE HIM, JUST
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WHEN THE MOVEMENT INTENSIFIES, AND WE ARE SKEPTICAL THAT A HEALTH PROBLEM AND OVERWORK EXPLAINS ALL, AS THE CHINESE WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE.

8. IN APRIL WE OFFERED THE CAUTION THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MOVEMENT WERE GOING TO BECOME MORE COMPLICATED AND CONFUSING TO FOLLOW AND THAT THE QUESTION OF CONTROL OVER THE MOVEMENT WAS GOING TO BE IMPORTANT. WE WANT TO REITERATE THAT IN TRYING TO LOOK AHEAD NOW. DIRECTING A MOVEMENT OF MASS CRITICISM AGAINST IDEOLOGICAL DEVIATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY BACKSLIDING IS AN ESTABLISHED MAOIST TECHNIQUE FOR DEALING WITH LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS AND IN THIS EPISODE, AS IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE 1970-71 STRUGGLE WITH LIN BIAO AND COMPANY, IT IS AIMED AT TAKING OUT SOME ELEMENT AT THE TOP AND REDISTRIBUTING POWER. THOSE TWO PREVIOUS EPISODES TURNED UGLY AND LEFT DIVISION AND SCORES TO SETTLE, AND THERE IS NO REASON AT THIS POINT TO BELIEVE THAT THE PRESENT STRUGGLE IS GOING TO BE EASY OR THAT IT WILL SETTLE ANYTHING SOON.

9. AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE CAMPAIGN THUS FAR HAS FAILED TO IGNITE MUCH POPULAR ENTHUSIASM, AND APATHY TINGED WITH WARINESS PROBABLY CHARACTERIZES THE GENERAL REACTION OF THE MASSES. THE RECENT PUSH ON ORGANIZING CONTINGENTS OF THEORETICIANS, AND THE DECISION TO ALLOW FREER POSTER CRITICISM, REPRESENT EFFORTS TO INJECT MORE VERVE INTO THE MOVEMENT. AS THE JULY EDITORIAL IMPLIED, THE MOVEMENT HAS YET TO BECOME SELF-SUSTAINING.

10. IN THE WAKE OF THE LIN BIAO AFFAIR IN 1971 WE SPECULATED THAT MUCH DEPENDED ON THE TIME AVAILABLE TO MAO AND CHOU TO

PUT THE REGIME'S HOUSE BACK IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR ORDERLY SUCCESSION. TIME APPEARS TO BE RUNNING OUT MORE SWIFTLY NOW, AND IT IS HARDER RATHER THAN EASIER TO SEE ANYONE CAPABLE OF FILLING THEIR SHOES. WE CANNOT POINT TO ANYONE WHO SEEMS TO CATCH POPULAR CHINESE IMAGININGS AND FAR FROM CLOSING RANKS BEHIND THE NEW PARTY HEIRARCHY SET UP TEN MONTHS AGO, THE MOVEMENT IS LETTING THE GENIE OF FACTIONAL STRIFE OUT OF THE BOTTLE AGAIN. DOUBT IS NOW CAST ON CHOU'S ABILITY TO TAKE MAO'S PLACE, AND THE COLLECTIVE ARRANGEMENT OF PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN SET UP TEN MONTHS AGO AT THE TENTH PARTY CONGRESS IS LIKELY TO BE IN SHAMBLES BEFORE THIS STRUGGLE IS OVER.

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10. FOR ALL THE REPORTS OF HIS PHYSICAL DECLINE, MAO'S AUTHORITY BEHIND THE UNFOLDING OF THE MOVEMENT IS OF KEY IMPORTANCE. THUS FAR NO CLEAR MAJOR PRONOUNCEMENT ON EVENTS HAS BEEN DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO HIM, ALTHOUGH IT IS STILL SAID THAT HE INITIATED AND LEADS THE MOVEMENT. THERE IS NOTHING TO INDICATE THAT THE CHAIRMAN HAS GOTTEN OUT AND AROUND THE COUNTRY AS HE DID DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND IN THE STRUGGLE WITH LIN. (IN AUGUST OF 1971 MAO TRAVELED TO MEET WITH IMPORTANT MILITARY REGION COMMANDERS AND REESTABLISH THEIR LOYALTIES TO HIM IN THE STRUGGLE WITH LIN.) HOWEVER, WE WOULD GUESS THAT MAO IS GIVING IMPORTANT GUIDANCE AND THAT HE LIKELY TOOK A PERSONAL HAND IN THE CALL FOR FREER, SHARPER CRITICISM, CERTAINLY THE MOVEMENT WOULD NOT HAVE COME THIS FAR WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL.

11. THERE IS AN EFFORT AFOOT TO BOOST CHIANG CHING, MAO'S WIFE, AND SHE IS IN THERE FIGHTING FOR POSITION, PROBABLY WITH SOME SUCCESS BUT NOT ENOUGH YET TO BRING HER OUT INTO THE OPEN. THERE ARE GROUNDS TO SPECULATE THAT SHE IS PLAYING A ROLE IN GUIDING THIS MOVEMENT WITH SOME HOPE THAT THROUGH IT SHE CAN REMOUNT TO THE PROMINENT POSITION SHE ENJOYED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. IF SO, SHE HAS A LONG WAY TO GO. BUT OUR SPECULATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT A NEW PHASE OF MASS AGITATION WOULD EMERGE AND GIVE HER A RENEWED LEASE ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY, APPEARS TO BE WORKING OUT.

12. OBVIOUSLY THE REGIME AND THE SYSTEM CAN STAND MUCH MORE STRAIN THAN THE STRUGGLE HAS CAUSED TO DATE WITHOUT SERIOUS MALFUNCTIONING. NATIONAL DEFENSE AND BASIC PUBLIC ORDER HAVE NOT BEEN IMPAIRED AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE ARE BEING HANDLED IN ESSENTIALLY NORMAL FASHION. XENOPHOBIA, GENERAL PRICKLINESS IN FOREIGN DEALINGS, AND A TENDENCY TO BRING FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTO THE STRUGGLE HAVE NOT DEVELOPED NOTICEABLY BEYOND THE LEVEL THAT SURFACED EARLIER. THE MAJOR EFFECT OF THE MOVEMENT ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS CONTINUES TO BE THE PREOCCUPATION OF OFFICIALS WITH INTERNAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND A WARINESS TOWARD STICKING THEIR NECKS OUT ON INITIATIVES AND NEW DECISIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SLOGANS, POLICIES, SEMI-ANNUAL REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL LEADERS, SOCIAL CHANGE, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974HONGK07467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740176-0406
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740778/aaaacoqa.tel
Line Count: 332
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MID-YEAR PRC INTERNAL POLITICAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY. TENSIONS ARE RISING MORE SHARPLY NOW IN THE YEAR-OLD
TAGS: PINT, CH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005